



Holiday Season

Safety takes no holidays

The holiday season is upon us! People are feeling festive, including enjoying holiday parties and decorating the workspace. Celebrating the holidays is something fun to look forward to each year, but keeping ourselves safe is of utmost importance.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, over 12,000 people nationally are treated for falls, cuts, shocks, and burns due to incidents involving faulty holiday lights, dried-out Christmas trees, and other holiday decorations. Always take safety precautions to avoid potential personal injuries and property damage.



Decorating 101

If not completed safely, decorating the workplace can result in dangerous tripping hazards and falls. Avoid placing freestanding decorations and gifts in busy areas where people might run into them or trip over them.

It's also essential to make sure that your holiday décor does not block exits, cover exit signage, or block access to safety equipment, such as fire extinguishers and eye wash stations. Do not place any type of decorative items on or near sprinklers or in exit corridors.

Bright ideas for safe holiday decorating

Traditional decorations such as wreaths and snowmen do not require any electricity, but other common decorations such as string lights do. Below are some tips to celebrate safely:

- Inspect all lights, electrical decorations, timers, and extension cords for damage before using
- Avoid overloading electrical outlets with too many electrical decorations or devices – they can overheat and cause a fire
- Never try to make a three-prong plug fit into a two-prong outlet
- Only use certified equipment – you can confirm this by looking for a certified label from UL (or other recognized testing lab)
- Turn off all electrical decorations before leaving the workplace
- If you'll be using an extension cord, here are some additional tips:
 - Refrain from placing extension cords in high-traffic areas or under rugs, carpets or furniture – if necessary, use an extension cord cover
 - Never attempt to extend the length of an extension cord by connecting it to another extension cord
 - Don't place extension cords in walls or ceilings, as this can cause overheating

Climbing the ladder to safety

Regardless of electricity, decorating may require using a ladder to be put in place. Follow these guidelines to safely use a ladder:

- Make sure there is no exposed electrical wiring and never use during storms or in windy weather
- Remember to have 3 points of contact at all times
- Use the 4:1 ratio rule – i.e. if the ladder is 4 feet tall, place the ladder base 1 foot from the wall
- Be careful when placing or removing items from shelves, trees, or roofs as this may cause you to lose balance
- Use the right ladder for the right job – correct height, non-slip feet, no signs of warping or rust, securely locked and braced in place



Tips for Success When Talking to Your Team

- **Preparation is Key:** Keep the topic relevant. Work with your team to review workplace safety during the holiday season and make sure everyone knows what to do, who to notify, and where to go in the event of an injury.
- **Stay Positive:** Keep the focus on what can be done to create a safe workplace, instead of focusing on what has gone wrong in the past.
- **Share a Story, Ask for a Story:** Storytelling is a powerful method to convey information. Stories from your employees make the topic even more relatable.

Safety at Home

According to the National Fire Protection Association, 860 home fires are caused by holiday decorations each year. An additional 300 home fires are caused by Christmas trees per year, resulting in an average of 10 deaths, 40 injuries, and about \$7 million in property damage and loss. Take a look at the following tips to ensure the safety of you and your family during the winter holidays:

- Make sure that your smoke detectors are working and fire extinguishers are fully charged and easily accessible
- Outdoor electrical lights and decorations should be plugged into circuits protected by Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCIs)
- Exercise caution when decorating near power lines – keep yourself and your equipment at least 10 feet from power lines
- Water your Christmas tree daily to prevent a fire hazard
- Never connect more than 3 strings of incandescent lights together
- Keep all decorations at least 3 feet away from heating equipment or an open flame



For Additional Information

Contact Gwen Butler, Director, Environmental Health & Safety, at 847.491.4936 with any questions.